



Final Report
BULGARIA: BULGARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR FAIR ELECTIONS
AND CIVIL RIGHTS PROGRAM
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I. SUMMARY

From 1990 to 1998, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) assisted the Bulgarian Association of Fair Elections and Civil Rights (BAFECR) to develop its civic education and election monitoring programs. NDI has worked with BAFECR to enhance its non-electoral efforts as a government watchdog organization, to design programs that disseminate civic organizing skills to all Bulgarian civic groups, to advise and support election-related activities, and to strengthen organizational management and fundraising capabilities. Between 1994 and 1996, NDI placed a resident representative in Bulgaria to provide BAFECR with technical and financial assistance with a focus on strengthening the Association's financial and organizational sustainability to build the organization's long-term financial health. Since January 1996, however NDI has not had a direct presence in the BAFECR office, but the Institute has maintained weekly contact with the organization and held periodic in-country training sessions. NDI also provided support for such operational expenses as salaries, rent and equipment.

The Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights is an independent, nonpartisan organization dedicated to strengthening civil society and transparency in government. Founded in the spring of 1990 on the eve of Bulgarian's first multiparty elections, BAFECR has worked to foster needed transparency and accountability at all levels of government. While best known for its election monitoring activities, BAFECR conducts a variety of programs including anti-corruption activities, civic education and public opinion research. The Association boasts a nationwide network of civic clubs in 26 regions and more than 5,000 members.

In 1998, BAFECR suffered a tremendous loss with the death of Executive Director Michael Yanakiev. Although this loss was a serious setback for the organization, current and former members came together in support of the organization and new leadership is emerging. Now wholly independent of NDI's assistance, BAFECR is working to diversify its funding sources, decentralize its organizational structure and identify the role it should play in Bulgaria's democratic development.

II. BACKGROUND

Before 1990, Bulgaria had no experience with a multiparty, democratic political system. During the 45-year period of communist rule, Bulgaria was among the Soviet Union's closest allies

– even offering itself as the Soviet Union’s sixteenth republic – and remained one of the most isolated societies of the Warsaw Pact countries. On November 10, 1989, a “palace coup” orchestrated by future president Petar Mladenov forced long-time leader Todor Zhivkov to resign, and signaled the beginning of a transition toward democracy led by a reformed and renamed communist party, the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

NDI initiated its work in Bulgaria in March 1990. In response to widespread concerns over little citizen confidence in the “democratic opening,” NDI assisted in establishing a nonpartisan organization, the Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (BAFECR), to monitor the June 10, 1990 elections. NDI’s assistance helped BAFECR recruit and train 10,000 volunteers within two months and conduct a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) on election day. These efforts enhanced citizen confidence in the official election results and energized a small group of BAFECR leaders to continue their efforts in increasing citizens’ understanding of a democratic political system.

To continue to promote democratic development following the 1990 elections, BAFECR requested assistance from NDI. In the early and mid 1990s, inter-party squabbling, government boycotts, rampant corruption and the slow pace of reform caused people to become disinterested in politics and to avoid involvement in political and public life. With NDI’s support, BAFECR sought to educate people about their rights to hold elected officials accountable to citizen concerns.

By 1993, BAFECR had mastered a majority of election monitoring techniques. It had not, however, established a clear nonelection mandate, nor had it developed the leadership potential of local activists. NDI’s efforts between 1994 and 1999, therefore, targeted BAFECR’s leadership and its structural and organizational development. NDI placed a resident representative between 1994 and 1996 to help BAFECR create a structure that would foster BAFECR’s long-term survival and to help establish BAFECR’s reputation not solely as an election monitoring organization, but also as a civic education organization.

Severe hardship caused by hyperinflation and a collapsed currency precipitated a political crisis in Bulgaria during the first weeks of 1997. Massive demonstrations in the capital forced the resignation of the ruling Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the appointment of a caretaker government led by Stefan Sofiyanski, and led to the decision to hold new elections in April. Political and economic upheavals in Bulgaria indicated that serious weaknesses existed within the country’s system of government. Key actors in the democratic process either misunderstood or ignored their role in the system. A significant portion of citizens remain disengaged from their leaders and from institutions charged with representing their interests and rights. Leaders did not accept or understand the need to carry through with their promises or to bring transparency to their actions and policies. Finally, the media had not always proved objective or impartial in its political reporting. These conditions underscored the need for an organization such as BAFECR, dedicated not only to increasing citizens’ awareness of their rights, but also to increasing leaders’ awareness of their obligations.

Despite many political and economic improvements, citizens are still uncertain that the government’s reform program will positively affect their lives. This ambivalence indicates that

Bulgaria is still in transition to democracy and must make significant progress in developing political leaders and institutions responsive to people's needs. These conditions demonstrate the need for an organization like BAFECR, dedicated not only to increasing citizens' awareness of their rights, but also to raising awareness among political leaders of their obligations to the electorate. Between 1996 and 1999, NDI continued to provide BAFECR with material assistance and technical support in developing the organization's financial sustainability. With NDI's assistance, BAFECR promoted and strengthened democracy through its civic education and election monitoring programs that foster transparency and public involvement in the political process. BAFECR has grown over the years into an independent, proactive and innovative organization that has "graduated" from direct NDI assistance.

III. OBJECTIVES

NDI provided training, and technical and financial assistance to BAFECR to promote Bulgaria's democratic transition. While NDI sought to achieve several objectives indirectly through its financial support of BAFECR, NDI also had direct objectives for its work with the organization. The objectives listed below are separated into those that were met through BAFECR initiatives and those NDI undertook directly through its own programmatic activities.

NDI achieved the following objectives through BAFECR:

- Educate citizens about their rights to participate in the democratic process
- Educate elected officials about the need to be responsive to constituent concerns as representatives of the people
- Develop and conduct civic actions that demonstrate the positive contribution citizens can make to public affairs
- Further enhance citizen confidence in the election process and other democratic processes

NDI achieved the following direct objectives:

- Enable the organization to operate from 1996 through 1998 as it sought alternative sources of funding
- Enhance BAFECR's voter education and monitoring capabilities in pre-election periods
- Define clearly for BAFECR members and staff a nonelectoral mandate
- Strengthen the management and financial sustainability capabilities of BAFECR

IV. NDI ACTIVITIES

A. Institutional and Program Support

From April 1994 through June 1999, NDI entered into four cooperative agreements with BAFECR, providing the organization with \$413,136¹ in institutional and program support. With NDI's support, BAFECR fulfilled the objectives it set to increase citizen participation and confidence in the political process. With these funds, BAFECR maintained a nationwide network of 26 local clubs, a national office in Sofia, and conducted election-related activities for the December 1994 presidential, the October 1995 local, November 1996 presidential, and April 1997 parliamentary elections. A detailed description of how BAFECR used cooperative agreement funds to conduct its program activities can be found in BAFECR's final report (see attachment one).

B. Development of BAFECR's Electoral Programs

By 1994, BAFECR had become experienced in conducting election-related activities and no longer required NDI's direct supervision in organizing election monitoring programs. Between 1994 and 1999, therefore, NDI played an advisory role and provided limited technical assistance to BAFECR as the organization expanded its menu of election activities:

- In advance of the 1994 parliamentary elections, NDI Resident Representative Lisa McLean consulted with local leaders on conducting pilot candidate fora and Get-Out-The-Vote initiatives for mayoral by-elections; assisted BAFECR in the development of training materials for election observers; and consulted with National Staff on all aspects of BAFECR's election program (see attachment two for copy of BAFECR's 1994 *Elections '94 Manual for BAFECR Observers*).
- Prior to the 1995 local elections, NDI helped BAFECR design its voter education publication "Local Election '95;" trained local club leaders how to conduct successful candidate fora; assisted in a new BAFECR initiative to collect and publicize candidate biographies and platforms; and consulted with National Staff on all aspects of BAFECR's election program.
- In addition to these activities, BAFECR carried out its first media monitoring program. From September 12 through 17, NDI invited Miguel Acosta from the Mexican Academy of Human Rights and Petrit Hrizaj of the Albanian Society for Democratic Culture to share their knowledge of media monitoring with Bulgarian sociologists and assist in training the volunteers conducting the first media monitoring program ever conducted in Bulgaria. From September 20 through November 10, a team of BAFECR volunteers and sociologists monitored local and national media to determine the equality of election-related coverage that political parties received in national and regional newspapers as well as in national

¹\$133,735 in 1994, \$166,580 in 1995, \$104,821 in 1996, and \$8,000 in 1998.

television and radio. BAFECR held a press conference to publicize the goals of the program and generated considerable public interest. With NDI's assistance in editing the English version of the report and developing an effective format for presentation, BAFECR released its results in a comprehensive report following the elections (see attachment three).

C. Development of NonElection Programming

In the early 1990s, BAFECR became the premier election monitoring organization in Bulgaria. With frequent elections, the need for BAFECR to develop a non-election focus was somewhat neglected. In 1993, however, BAFECR leaders began to consider the organization's long-term existence and how to stay active between elections. With NDI assistance, BAFECR expanded its role as an election monitoring organization to become an intermediary organization that promotes citizen participation and facilitates elected officials' response. NDI's assistance in this area consisted of the following activities:

- In 1995, NDI Resident Representative Lisa McLean helped to design a broad-based civic action program, focused on the development of public participation and local government accountability, that transformed the organization into one more capable of promoting civic awareness and participation (see BAFECR's Final Report for a detailed description of the "Inside Your Municipality" program).
- Chicago-based community organizer Jerry Morrison prepared 14 BAFECR club leaders for launching a series of community meetings in preparation for the fall 1995 local elections. These meetings were organized to raise awareness about municipal government's role in a democracy and the importance of citizens in that process.

The primary objective of the training was to provide the participants with basic community organizing techniques. Morrison discussed the concept of power by emphasizing the strength of BAFECR's network. He also conducted a session on "thinking like an organizer." In addition, staff were presented hypothetical community problem to solve, which honed their skills in identifying issues that build power of the organization and train others to use power.

- In September 1994, NDI brought eight BAFECR members to the United States on a PIET program to observe both the national and local operations of several strong U.S. civic organizations. This trip and a follow-on study mission in July 1995 enabled BAFECR leaders to visit the national and local offices of a number of model organizations, to examine their decision-making systems, funding/fundraising techniques, specific methods used to educate elected officials, their ability to use the media, as well as the office materials and communications equipment the organizations employ to conduct daily operations. In addition, the July 1995 mission included a three-day training program with the Chicago-based Midwest Academy (MWA). MWA trainers taught BAFECR leaders some of the key aspects of community organizing, concentrating on issue identification, strategy development

and fundraising (see attachment four for agendas).

D. Organizational Development

Before 1994, BAFECR operated essentially as a loose federation of clubs with a decentralized structure. Certain problems resulted from a lack of structured cohesion, such as the tendency of local leaders to analyze the country's problems differently based on conflicting priorities. To address these obstacles, NDI and the BAFECR leadership decided to "re-centralize" the organization and coordinate the activities of the local clubs. NDI conducted the following activities to assist in the restructuring of the organization and make club leaders feel part of the BAFECR network:

- In April and May 1994, Lisa McLean provided guidance on the reorganization of the BAFECR staff structure and advised the Association's national staff on the design and development of a new set of by-laws aimed at increasing local clubs' involvement in BAFECR activities.
- In mid-May 1994, BAFECR regional leaders convened to review the revised by-laws and adopt an action plan for conducting citizen education on elections and human rights. The regional leaders adopted the by-laws which created a National Program Council (NPC). The NPC was to meet every six months to counsel BAFECR on its policy priorities. The NPC, comprised of regional representatives, evaluated and implemented national and regional plans on behalf of the organization and contributed to staff leadership development. In 1994 and 1995, NDI assisted in setting agendas for semi-annual NPC meetings and for the NPC sub-committee meetings (Finance, Membership, Communications, and Strategy Committees).
- The PIET study missions in September 1994 and July 1995 (mentioned above) exposed participants to different organizational structures of American nongovernmental organizations and showed them examples of operation and communication systems between local branches and the national headquarters.

In order to improve relations between the National Office and local clubs and to keep all BAFECR volunteers informed about the organization's activities, NDI helped to initiate a communications program. This communications program formally linked the BAFECR clubs and served as a primary mode of information sharing.

- In October 1994, BAFECR developed its first quarterly newsletter with the help and guidance of Lisa McLean. The newsletter was distributed throughout the BAFECR network and provided information to the Association's volunteers, NGOs, members of the press, and other interested parties on BAFECR's activities. Newsletters continued to be produced through 1997. With funding from NDI's final cooperative agreement in 1998, two additional newsletters were produced and distributed in late 1998 and early 1999 (see attachment five).

for copies of BAFECR newsletters).

- A NDI communications expert worked with BAFECR in January 1997 on developing a promotional brochure (see attachment six for BAFECR's brochure) as part of NDI's effort to increase the organization's fundraising capability. BAFECR had intended to create a brochure to include in its fundraising solicitation packet but did not know how to design it or what language to include. The communications expert worked with BAFECR's press officer to develop a concise mission statement, lay out the text, and choose graphic designs. The first version of the brochure was written in English, recognizing that most of BAFECR's funding in the near future will come from international sources rather than from Bulgarian businesses or individuals. A Bulgarian version was developed after the April 1997 parliamentary elections.
- In June 1997, BAFECR created a web page on the Internet that would introduce it to potential funders and would generate interest in the organization's programs and publications. The address is <http://bafecr.mobiltel.bg>.

Since the beginning of 1995, BAFECR leaders have understood that NDI could not continue to fund its programs and operating costs in the long-term. Recognizing that in order to survive over the long-term, BAFECR would need to create a local base of financial support, NDI and BAFECR made fundraising from Bulgarian sources a major priority.

- Seeking to strengthen BAFECR's daily operations as well as the organization's ability to diversify its funding sources, NDI Grants Officer Laura McQuade visited the Association in November 1994 to train BAFECR's new grants administrator on writing proposals, overseeing budgets and managing multiple grants.
- In March 1996, NDI Program Assistant Will Rogers provided technical advice to BAFECR's fundraising committee regarding specific fundraising activities to conduct. With Rogers' advice, the committee developed a plan to provide an overview of projects promoting sustainability, which BAFECR intended to undertake throughout the year.
- In June 1996, Mr. Rogers developed a fundraising manual for BAFECR activists, entitled *Free Money for Your Organization: Easy Ways to Raise Funds at the Grassroots Level* (see attachment seven). The manual outlines fundraising activities that have proved successful in countries around the world. It provides 14 rules for effective fundraising and documents 13 practical projects to help raise funds.
- In July 1996, NDI expert Amy Conroy, former Executive Director of the Women's Campaign Fund, made a formal assessment of BAFECR's fundraising capabilities and conducted training on fundraising techniques. In meetings with the national staff, Ms. Conroy helped to plan a long-term development strategy, including a time line incorporating

formal and informal fundraising activities. Ms. Conroy also assisted BAFECR staff in developing a proposal for a nationwide constitutional rights project which was subsequently funded by the National Endowment for Democracy. Discussions that Ms. Conroy held with local clubs were geared toward implementing grassroots fundraising activities and exploring ways in which BAFECR's organizational structure could better support fundraising efforts.

- Over a two-week period in November 1996, a delegation of seven BAFECR representatives – six regional leaders and one national staff member – participated in a fundraising training program in the United States designed and implemented by NDI. This program was funded by PIET. In Washington and in the Boston area, the delegation participated in fundraising training sessions and site visits to a variety of organizations. The program familiarized participants with fundraising methods and exposed them to different ways in which large American organizations divide fundraising responsibilities between national and local offices. In addition, NDI facilitated contact between BAFECR and American-based foundations that might fund future BAFECR programs.
- In September 1997, NDI held a two-day fundraising workshop in Sofia for 23 of BAFECR's 26 regional club leaders to increase the organization's focus on targeting local businesses and corporations rather than individuals due to the 1997 economic crisis. NDI expert Polly Agee, a Washington, DC-based fundraiser, tailored her presentation to the Bulgarian situation where there is little tradition in donating money in order to enhance the seminar's relevance to the participants. The workshop addressed: developing a fundraising plan; creating a list of prospective donors; developing a solicitation package; and fundraising administration.

From the beginning of its partnership with BAFECR, NDI sought to develop the management and leadership skills of the National Staff and local branch presidents. As NDI's work with the Association shifted in 1994 to focus on organizational assistance, greater emphasis was placed on improving staff members' capabilities to run an effective institution.

- When Lisa McLean arrived in Sofia in early 1994, one of the first tasks she undertook was to inventory staff responsibilities at the national level. She made several recommendations, including suggesting the addition of a press secretary, and the development of a Club Coordinator position. BAFECR accepted these suggestions, and McLean worked closely with the people who filled those positions to develop their roles and responsibilities.
- After almost a year of focusing on long-term financial sustainability with BAFECR and the need for a full-time fundraiser, the Association pledged its commitment to hire one in 1997. NDI's long-term relationship with the Association allowed it to actively engage national staff in prioritizing this issue and convince BAFECR of its effectiveness.
- In December 1997, NDI expert Michael Groh, a specialist with more than 25 years of experience in NGO development, conducted a preliminary training for the fundraising director. Groh focused on such issues as: why funders provide money to an organization,

what organizational and programmatic questions funders ask; strategies for conducting meetings with funders; and ideas for beginning preliminary donor research.

- In May 1998 Groh returned to Bulgaria to consult on organizational issues and to assess BAFECR's overall strengths and weaknesses. Mr. Groh worked with BAFECR to outline options for addressing a variety of institutional development issues, including internal communication, strategic planning and by-laws. Since NDI's funding relationship with BAFECR was in its last year, Mr. Groh's assessment helped NDI to focus on final steps to help strengthen the group's financial and organizational sustainability.

Before the training, NDI developed a questionnaire that was distributed to BAFECR clubs to gather information about the level of club activity, to solicit thoughts on current programs, to assess their feelings about communication with the national office, and to learn what they hope BAFECR would achieve in the future. This survey was integrated into the week-long program by conducting face-to-face interviews with seven BAFECR club leaders about their responses, and reporting the analyzed results to the national staff.

During the five-day program, Groh worked with BAFECR's program director to identify organizational issues needing discussion and suggested initial steps to address them. One of the critical issues raised in the survey and by national staff was the revision of BAFECR's by-laws. In addition to providing commentary on the substance of new proposed by-laws, Groh helped devise a variety of transparent and inclusive means to solicit club input.

Groh also spent one-half day working with two junior members of the national staff. Groh helped them network with their counterparts in other Bulgarian NGOs who could serve as mentors and suggested tactics for handling daily challenges. In addition to focusing on their individual job responsibilities, Groh introduced them to the fundamentals of fundraising, which led to visible results the following day as they began identifying and researching potential funders

- In late 1998, BAFECR held two pivotal National Program Council meetings resulting in significant organizational improvements, which were funded by NDI. As a critical next step to previous coordination meetings among Acting Director Miroslav Sevlievski and seven other club leaders, the national office staff organized a one-day working session on October 24. In addition to national staff members, 24 regional club leaders attended the session. NDI also sent former Bulgaria Resident Representative Lisa McLean to demonstrate NDI's support and to offer institutional knowledge and guidance.

This first meeting set the stage for openly identifying areas for change in a transparent manner. BAFECR members also selected three committees, By-Laws, Finance and Program Strategy, which were tasked with examining solutions to identified problems. Most importantly, BAFECR members recommitted themselves to promoting BAFECR's mission and took responsibility for ensuring the improvement and sustainability of the organization. According to Sevlievski's final remarks: "... today's National Program Council session concluded that BAFECR's mission is still relevant. Using our entire knowledge and all our

efforts as a national organization, we will do our best to carry our mission and to declare our readiness to further develop our activities from the past nine years. The truth is that the Association exists now and will continue to exist in the future.”

The second meeting took place December 12 to review the decisions made by the three committees. The Finance committee prepared a draft cost-saving funding plan and the Program Strategy committee completed a draft program development plan. The By-Laws committee made substantial changes to BAFECR’s governance structure. Nine territorial offices were established and those club leaders became members of the new Council of Territorial Coordinators. The new regional clubs include: Sofia; Veliko Tarnovo; Plovdiv; Pleven; Kurdjali; Razgrad; Blagoevgrad; Varna; and Yambol. The acting executive director, program director and administrative director are also members of the Council. Finally, the National Program Council was renamed the National Council to demonstrate the authority this body exercises in all organizational issues, not just programmatic ones (see attachment eight for a chart illustrating the new administrative structure).

To assist BAFECR in training new Program Director Angelina Tchordadjyska, hired in November 1998, Ms. McLean conducted an orientation consultation with Ms. Tchordadjyska in December. Ms. McLean provided information on NDI and BAFECR’s relationship beginning in 1990, institutional background of both organizations, and suggestions for effectively working with the Association’s local clubs and its executive board.

V. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Institutional and Program Support

Objective: To enable the organization to continue to operate from 1996 through 1998 as it sought alternative sources of funding.

Many of BAFECR’s successes can be attributed to the training and constant advice that has been available to its leaders from NDI staff and experts. Furthermore, BAFECR has been able to focus on designing and implementing programs because of NDI’s willingness to support the organization’s infrastructure costs and many of its activity costs.

During the last quarter of 1997, BAFECR formed a partnership with another organization, the Bulgarian Academy for Research and Prognosis, to undertake a Democracy Network Project-funded study on public attitudes toward the electoral law. By agreeing to work in partnership, BAFECR moved from its insular approach to a more cooperative one. This opened the organization to more opportunities to receive funding. BAFECR’s work on this project centered on analyzing the results of focus groups involving journalists and lawyers in Pleven and Sofia. This analysis informed BAFECR’s recommendations to the legislature for such proposed changes to the electoral law as establishing a permanent election commission and moving to a single ballot system.

B. Development of BAFECR’s Electoral Programming

Objective: To enhance BAFECR's voter education and monitoring capabilities in the pre-election period.

BAFECR's pre-election voter education and voter mobilization efforts succeeded in informing citizens of their right to vote during the December 1994 parliamentary elections. The mobilization of volunteer election monitors helped to ensure a strict adherence to the election law while BAFECR's rapid publication of its parallel vote tabulation² assisted in raising public confidence in the election results. In addition, the enormous turnout of volunteer election monitors provides a concrete example of successful citizen participation to the government, other NGOs and citizens at large. Finally, BAFECR's candidate fora provided citizens with the opportunity to assess the abilities and platforms of individuals vying for public office and to judge candidates according to their views on specific issues.

During municipal elections in October 1995, BAFECR mounted a sophisticated election program that demonstrated the depth of its development as a contributing partner in the country's nascent civil society. The concept of mobilizing large numbers of politically active volunteers directly confronted the apathy wrought by 40 years of state-induced dependency, which in turn enhanced prospects for greater political discourse and citizen involvement in governance.

BAFECR's activities both before and during the 1996 presidential elections demonstrated the organization's continued progress in its election-related programs. Not only did BAFECR successfully complete such election-related activities as a get out the vote campaign, a nation-wide poll-watching effort and an accurate PVT, it also branched out into new fields. BAFECR's successful media monitoring campaign illustrated the organization's desire and ability to develop new means for furthering Bulgaria's democratic transition. Its success in this new capacity indicated the versatility and level of sophistication achieved by the organization with the assistance of NDI.

Bulgaria's national television station aired the BAFECR-style "Hour of the Public" forums during the 1997 parliamentary election campaign. This demonstrated that BAFECR's activities are well-respected and critical to public education efforts. Furthermore, the fact that the head of the OSCE election mission attended a briefing at BAFECR headquarters on the morning of elections with members of the Central Election Commission indicated the organization's credibility and integrity.

BAFECR succeeded in increasing citizens' awareness of the democratic process through the publication of its voter education booklets. The booklets were distributed to 200,000 citizens and reached thousands more through the printed media during the time of the April 1997 elections. Two national dailies published large portions of it, as did several regional publications. BAFECR's PVT proved to be the most accurate of three PVTs conducted on election night. In addition to the PVT

² "A PVT is a method for monitoring the tabulation of votes whereby election monitors record results obtained from individual voting stations and compare these findings with official results (*How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections*, NDI 1995)."

results, BAFECR also distributed the results of its media monitoring program on election night. The timely release of this informative report earned BAFECR a place on the front page of the largest national newspaper on the morning after the election and brought the issue of fair media coverage to the attention of Bulgarian citizens.

C. Development of BAFECR's NonElection Programming

Objective: To educate elected officials about the need to be responsive to constituent concerns as representatives of the people.

In order to ensure long-term sustainability, it was necessary for BAFECR to expand its mission to include goals that could be addressed during nonelection periods. In close consultation with NDI, BAFECR developed its role as a civic organization by undertaking nationwide educational and advocacy campaigns. BAFECR's civic and human rights education programs helped to inform the public about a number of significant issues and to familiarize them with the fundamentals of democratic governance. Community meetings coordinated with the publication of educational materials served as a stimulus for considerable public discussion and provided citizens with a medium for dialogue and debate.

BAFECR's 1995 "Inside Your Municipality" local government project successfully raised citizen awareness of the public's perception of municipal government, and the importance of voting in the upcoming local election. Through the civic education program on local government, BAFECR demonstrated its professional development as an increasingly effective civic organization. Local BAFECR leaders demonstrated their ability to bring elected representatives and citizens together when they designed materials and gathered information to be included in the citizen guidebook, and helped formulate the composition and implementation of a nationwide series of public fora (see attachment nine for a copy of *You and Your Municipality*). The roundtable discussions also empowered local club leaders and developed skills in them that had previously only been developed at the national level.

The following results are not directly tied to NDI's assistance, but reflect the years of training and consultation BAFECR has received and applied to their work.

- BAFECR's election law reform program also served to distinguish the organization as more than just a monitoring group (see page 4 of BAFECR's Final Report, attachment one). In 1995, BAFECR researched and analyzed information gathered from the almost 300 municipal bi-elections the organization had monitored since 1992. BAFECR staff members determined six major issues in the election law with the potential to undermine citizen confidence in future election results and proposed specific changes in the law. In June, three of the six changes were adopted by the Grand National Assembly. Furthermore, in December 1995, BAFECR's national staff initiated an intensive research effort regarding the establishment of a permanent Bulgarian Central Election Commission. BAFECR drew from NDI election expertise and materials in researching different models of administrative election bodies and suggested plan of action which was submitted to Members of Parliament and government

bodies. This proposal was accepted, thus demonstrating the Association's advocacy skills.

- Throughout 1997 and part of 1998, BAFECR continued work on its Constitutional Rights Project and, in particular, the civic education component which is designed to empower citizens in small municipalities to address human rights violations (see page 14 of BAFECR's Final Report, attachment one). This project involved 12 regional clubs funded by NED and 10 funded by the Democracy Network Project (DNP). The regional clubs convened two to four consultations per month in which citizens received legal advice from lawyers working on a pro-bono basis. These legal consultations assisted BAFECR to gather information that it included in a set of brochures addressing commonly asked questions on constitutional rights. BAFECR printed 1,000 copies each of these brochures and distributed them through its network of local clubs.
- In fall of 1998, three regional clubs began promoting citizen participation and interaction with local officials in an effort to foster needed transparency and accountability at the local government level (see page 21 of BAFECR's Final Report, attachment one). In Razgrad, the Democracy Network Program funded a project entitled "Citizens Participation in Local Self-Government." The Veliko Tarnovo club promoted "The Role of Regional Media in Citizens Control of Local Government." The club in Rousse submitted a proposal and received funding from the Open Society Foundation to conduct a program on "Improving Interaction Between Authorities, Civic Organizations and Business Circles." These activities continued independently throughout 1998 and into 1999.
- As a testament to the continued innovation of BAFECR's programming, the Association participated in an anti-corruption project, Coalition 2000, in cooperation with several Bulgarian partners, including the Center for the Study of Democracy. In February 1999, national office staff drafted a proposal to conduct nine anti-corruption forums throughout Bulgaria. The Coalition 2000 board accepted this proposal in March, and granted BAFECR \$12,000 to administer the program during the next four months.

D. Organizational Development

Objective: Strengthen the management and financial sustainability capabilities of BAFECR.

1. Restructuring

The organizational restructuring which was undertaken in early 1994 was intended to give local BAFECR leaders a greater stake in the Association by including them in the decision-making structure. With the development of the National Program Council (NPC) and its working committees, greater coordination developed between local leaders across the country as well as between local and national leaders. Programs were developed that included all local clubs and relied on each of their active participation. As a result of the organizational changes, BAFECR became a unified network, rather than a loose confederation of like-minded clubs.

In May 1996, the BAFECR Shumen club convened a meeting of media representatives from local and national newspapers as well as the private radio station in Shumen to discuss the rights and responsibilities of journalists, legislative guarantees for freedom of speech and the relationship between local and national media. The discussion, led by BAFECR club leaders, sought to demonstrate the relationship between the news media and citizens in a democracy. The following day, the BAFECR-Razgrad club organized a public meeting regarding the difficulties facing local government. These types of local activity combined with BAFECR's nationally coordinated endeavors – undertaken in the absence of a NDI representative – demonstrated the increased independence being exercised by BAFECR.

The new Council of Territorial Coordinators and the Program Council created in 1998 will benefit BAFECR's internal communication and operation by giving club leaders the opportunity to participate in developing new programs and instituting appropriate policies. This new governance structure is a vital mechanism guaranteeing collaboration between national staff and local clubs.

2. Communications

On its own initiative, BAFECR developed a web page in 1997 to advertise its activities to potential funders and interested citizens. As a result of the emphasis NDI placed on the Association's internal and external communication strategies, BAFECR took ownership of this critical issue. By developing its own idea, the Association demonstrated its awareness of the importance of communicating its mission, activities and accomplishments.

3. Fundraising

NDI's constant emphasis on fundraising has helped BAFECR accept the need to diversify its fundraising sources. NDI has helped facilitate contact with potential donors and worked with BAFECR to begin implementing a fundraising strategy. The fundraising training mission to the United States in 1996 marked an important step for BAFECR on the way towards increased sustainability. BAFECR now employs several fundraisers both in local clubs and the national office who have been immersed in the techniques and concepts behind successful fundraising.

BAFECR succeeded in further diversifying its funding in the fall of 1996, through a successful proposal to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to conduct a year-long "Constitutional Civil Rights" project. This important step demonstrated the viability of using alternative funding for BAFECR's various projects. BAFECR launched the project in December 1996 to educate citizens in 25 municipalities on their constitutional rights and on how to protect those rights. With the information it had gathered through numerous meetings with citizens in small municipalities in 1997, BAFECR proposed 30 changes to the Bulgarian Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure. In July 1997, BAFECR circulated its proposals to members of the appropriate legislative committees in Parliament, and by the end of the month, 20 of BAFECR's suggested changes were implemented.

One of BAFECR's strongest clubs, the Plevin club, held its annual fundraising ball in the spring of 1997. While the revenue this event created was small, the fact that the event was held at

all indicated a willingness to try to raise funds even in the most challenging circumstances. As a testament to the Plevin club's optimism and growing fundraising capacity, its 1997 "Benefit Christmas Evening" raised more than \$500. The success of local fundraising events has increased the chances for other clubs to conduct similar activities, which will decrease BAFECR's dependence on international organizations.

Overall, NDI and BAFECR made fundraising from Bulgarian and international sources a major priority since January 1995. The first entirely Bulgarian fundraising effort conducted outside the capital city, in Plevin, netted \$275. Thousands of dollars worth of in-kind contributions were donated from Bulgarian supporters. The vast majority of these contributions has been free media. However, such items as computers, volunteer time, conference space and raffle prizes have also been donated. Since 1993, BAFECR has also raised more than \$350,000 from such donors as: Coalition 2000; the Democracy Network Project; the European Union; the National Endowment for Democracy; the Open Society Network; the United States Agency for International Development; and the Westminster Foundation.

4. Staff Development

BAFECR's training mission to the United States introduced to BAFECR leaders new management techniques which were beneficial to the organization's long-term sustainability. The program helped further develop the BAFECR leaders' practical methods of community activism and advocacy and introduced them to activities of like-minded NGOs operating in the US. The work NDI conducted with local clubs to develop leaders' skills and to encourage their involvement in program development has ensured that despite deficiencies in the National Office, BAFECR will continue to do good work through its local branches.

E. Unexpected Results

BAFECR's impact reached even beyond Bulgaria's borders and became viewed as the preeminent monitoring organization in the region serving as a model for others to follow. As it became more sophisticated in conducting election monitoring programs, NDI and others began to showcase the organization as an example to other monitoring groups throughout the world. In March 1997, BAFECR co-founder Miroslav Sevlievski traveled to Croatia to assist with the development of a newly formed domestic monitoring coalition. His participation in an NGO conference where domestic monitoring was discussed helped raise the participants' confidence level that a large-scale monitoring effort can be organized successfully in a short period of time.

BAFECR was asked to brief the leaders of the OSCE observer mission on the legal framework of the April 1997 elections, and it served as a resource for other international observer missions as well. Furthermore, in the days leading up to the election, a delegation of student leaders from Belgrade and Nis traveled to Sofia to observe BAFECR's election activities. Although skeptical at first that citizens can have an impact on ensuring the fairness of an election, by the end of their stay in Bulgaria, the students were energized to launch their own monitoring effort in Serbia.

BAFECR was also asked to organize an election observation mission for the 1997 municipal

elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Given the importance of these elections, this request was an indication that BAFECR is viewed as a professional organization with high standards and principles. BAFECR coordinated the recruitment of 100 English-speaking Bulgarian election supervisors for the OSCE. The confidence the OSCE placed in BAFECR to organize the operation indicated BAFECR's strong reputation within the international community for impartiality and reliability. Finally, the program also increased BAFECR's confidence that they can raise funds independently by providing election-related services.

In June 1998, the U.S. Embassy asked BAFECR to observe the September 1998 elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Known for their own monitoring successes in Bulgaria and in Bosnia's last national elections, BAFECR volunteers were given the opportunity to demonstrate one of the cornerstones of their organization's mission. The Sofia office organized and submitted the necessary forms for 130 supervisors, which included representatives from all of BAFECR's regional clubs as well as members from other NGOs, such as Union of the Bulgarian Foundations and Associations, Open Society Foundation, Center for Democracy Research and the Democracy Network Program. This collaborative effort brought individuals from different organizations together and improved cooperation among this diverse community.

Having received a special request from the Bulgarian Ministry of External Affairs, BAFECR recruited 56 volunteers who were intended to serve as OSCE civilian human rights and legal election supervisors in Kosovo in 1999. In order to organize the current recruitment process and expedite future election monitoring projects, BAFECR developed a database of individuals interested in monitoring elections. Although this mission never occurred due to a breakdown in international negotiations between the Serbian government and the Kosovar Albanians, BAFECR benefitted from intensive contact with government officials and an increase in its number of potential volunteers for future monitoring efforts.

VI. EVALUATION/CONCLUSION

BAFECR has grown over the years into an independent, proactive and innovative organization that has "graduated" from NDI assistance. The Association continues to provide an important vehicle for furthering democracy in the country. As a domestic, nonpartisan organization composed of civic activists and volunteers, BAFECR is uniquely positioned to demonstrate to citizens their role, function and power within the democratic system. Furthermore, now imbued with the necessary fundraising skills and organizational changes, BAFECR can continue to influence Bulgaria's democratic process long after NDI has ceased its program in the country.

Through BAFECR, the NDI program has had an impact on thousands of Bulgarians. Not only has BAFECR mobilized more than 10,000 volunteers but the organization has exposed countless others to the idea that citizens have the right to monitor government processes in a democracy. This message has also been sent to thousands of citizens who have participated in BAFECR seminars, who have seen and heard about BAFECR activities on election day, and who have read BAFECR publications. In addition, over the years, a core group of 100 to 200 BAFECR volunteers has directly participated in NDI leadership training activities – helping to professionalize the organization a well

as educate civic activists on the techniques and methods used to manage all aspects of a successful nongovernmental organization. Moreover, many of these activists have gone on to pursue other political activities.

BAFECR's efforts to strengthen ties to other NGOs contributed to the cooperative working relationships among the often contentious third sector. As a result of its initiatives, two effective partnerships – one on electoral law reform and the other on European Union Social Assistance Program – developed a collaborative and effective network in the capital and throughout the country. Finally, BAFECR's success in working with government ministries and local officials in distributing EU aid presents a noteworthy case of good cooperation between the NGO and government sectors. BAFECR has shown its ability to use its unique regional capacity and national level presence to establish a link between citizens and the government at the local level.

In May 1988, the European Union and the United States honored BAFECR during a celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Marshall Plan. BAFECR received \$20,000, which marked its achievements in strengthening civil society and boosting support for democracy. The award ceremony received considerable attention in Bulgaria, and Executive Director Michael Yanakiev was especially recognized for his accomplishments.

Although NDI achieved many results in its work, two areas in which the Institute was less successful include leadership development and financial independence. BAFECR's lack of attention to local leadership development became evident with the death of Executive Director Michael Yanakiev in the summer of 1998. Due to the untimely and extremely unfortunate loss, BAFECR was temporarily paralyzed due to a leadership vacuum. Another leadership setback occurred with the loss of a very promising program director in the spring of 1999. Although NDI had focused its efforts on organizational development and sustainability issues for the past two years, it had no way of anticipating these unforeseen events. Fortunately, BAFECR's former executive director assumed increased responsibility for day-to-day functions and spearheaded the search for new directors.

To address this and other organizational weaknesses, NDI played an integral role in generating national and local momentum for the October and December 1998 National Program council meetings where staff could address the challenges facing BAFECR. The commitment demonstrated among club leaders illustrated their readiness to participate in the decision-making process through the new Council of Territorial Coordinators and the Program Council. Club leaders, who were eager to accept leadership roles, were finally given a voice to discuss internal problems openly and transparently. With the creation of these two structures, grassroots initiatives and needs will be addressed by the active members whose strength carries the organization. NDI is confident that local leadership is emerging from this difficult period to address future challenges such as fundraising and ongoing institutional development.

NDI's efforts to foster BAFECR's financial independence proved difficult due to the political and economic crisis starting in late 1996. Many of the projects connected with increasing BAFECR's

fundraising potential proved unfeasible given hyperinflation which decimated average monthly wages and created severe shortages of all basic necessities. Although NDI had to cancel further plans for intensive fundraising planning due to the dire economic situation in early 1997, BAFECR nonetheless demonstrated its increasing financial independence by attracting alternative sources of international funding both locally and internationally.

Despite the significant economic and political crises, NDI and BAFECR did meet several objectives connected with increasing BAFECR's institutional and financial independence. NDI worked closely with BAFECR to produce a brochure designed to help it attract international donors. NDI also refocused its program on developing BAFECR's ability to solicit funds from international organizations. NDI assisted BAFECR in refining its proposal-writing skills, and identifying foundations that would be appropriate for BAFECR to approach. The unexpected parliamentary elections on April 19, 1997 also required BAFECR to suspend its other programs and launch its election activities. This demonstrated that BAFECR can be resourceful and flexible in response to changing needs in the face of political and social upheaval.

NDI's long-term relationship with the Association has considerably influenced the impact BAFECR has had in Bulgaria and in the region. However, BAFECR is now anxious and ready to assume full responsibility and ownership of its programs. NDI considers the Association's desire to work independently as one its more significant result of the Institute's nine years of close cooperation. In an effort to promote BAFECR's successes, the Institute will continue to apply the Association's expertise to NDI programs in countries throughout the world.

APPENDICES
BULGARIA: BULGARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR FAIR ELECTIONS
AND CIVIL RIGHTS PROGRAM
USAID Cooperative Agreement EUR-A-0094-00028-00
April 1994 to June 1999

1. Final Report on the Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights, 1994 - 1998
2. BAFECR's 1994 *Elections '94 Manual for BAFECR Observers*
3. The Parliamentary Elections as Mirrored in the Media, 1997
4. 1994 and 1995 PIET Study Trip Agendas
5. BAFECR Newsletters from 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998 and 1999
6. BAFECR's brochure
7. *Free Money for Your Organization: Easy Ways to Raise Funds at the Grassroots Level*
8. Chart of BAFECR's new administrative structure
9. *You and Your Municipality*